



## Miontuairiscí / Meeting Minutes

### Ratoath Municipal District

#### Special Meeting

**9.00 a.m., 9<sup>th</sup> November 2022, Swift Meeting Room/via Zoom**

An Cathaoirleach, Councillor Gillian Toole, presided.

**Councillors Present:** Brian Fitzgerald, Nick Killian and Maria Murphy.

**Councillors Present via Zoom:** Councillor Damien O'Reilly.

**Apologies:** Councillors Deirdre Geraghty-Smith and Gerry O'Connor.

**Officials in Attendance:**

**Chief Executive:** Jackie Maguire

**Head of Finance:** Fiona Lawless

**Director of Service:** Dara McGowan

**Financial Management Accountant:** Sheila Harkin

**Meetings Administrator:** Claire King

**Staff Officer:** Triona Keating

- To consider and adopt the Draft Budgetary Plan of Ratoath Municipal District issued under Section 102 (4A) of the Local Government Act, 2001 as amended by the Local Government Reform Act, 2014.**

The Report on the 2023 Draft Budgetary Plan of Navan, Kells, Trim, Laytown-Bettystown, Ashbourne and Ratoath Municipal Districts had been circulated to Councillors in advance of the meeting. This report provided the background to the Draft Budgetary Plan, the approach to its preparation, general statistics and the proposed General Municipal Allocation for each of the six Municipal Districts, as follows:

Description of Service	GMA - Ashbourne MD	GMA - Kells MD	GMA - Laytown-Bettystown MD	GMA - Navan MD	GMA - Trim MD	GMA - Ratoath MD	Total GMA 2023 Meath	Adopted Budget 2022
Members Discretionary Fund	90,000	105,000	105,000	105,000	90,000	105,000	600,000	600,000



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Housing Estates / Roads / Public Lighting	150,000	150,000	150,000	150,000	150,000	150,000	900,000	300,000
Litter Control Initiatives	6,500	6,500	6,500	6,500	6,500	6,500	39,000	39,000
Environmental Initiatives	4,500	4,500	4,500	4,500	4,500	4,500	27,000	27,000
Community Grants	20,000	20,000	20,000	25,000	20,000	20,000	125,000	98,000
Community Facilities (Pride of Place)	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	30,000	30,000
Arts, Festivals, Festive Decoration & MD Renewal	12,500	12,500	12,500	22,500	12,500	12,500	85,000	85,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>288,500</b>	<b>303,500</b>	<b>303,500</b>	<b>318,500</b>	<b>288,500</b>	<b>303,500</b>	<b>1,806,000</b>	<b>1,179,000</b>

It was confirmed that the 2023 budget was balanced, partly due to the significant level of government support provided, primarily with regard to wage and energy cost increases. The budget also takes account of the increases associated with the Moorhead Report. The main budget headings were outlined, with reference to the increase in payroll and energy costs and the reduction in insurance costs. The municipal districts profiles were outlined, having taken into account the preliminary 2022 census results.

In line with the statutory budget process, the discretionary element of the budget, totalling €1.806 million, is the focus of today's meeting, with this budget increase having resulted from the increase in LPT income.

The increased budget allocations for Housing Estates/Roads/Public Lighting and Community Grants were highlighted.

The Cathaoirleach and councillors thanked and commended Fiona Lawless, Sheila Harkin and the team in the Finance Department for their work in preparing the budget.

Matters raised by councillors included:

- Welcomed the additional funding for housing estates and community grants.
- Commended the team on balancing the budget and increasing the budget year on year.
- Acknowledged the progress in increasing parity between the municipal districts and queried whether Navan, as county town, was receiving adequate funding – the Navan 2030 scheme is primarily funded by the NTA and other levels of funding are also available, e.g. sustainable travel. Reference was also made to Enfield being the pilot for the Town Centre First Plan, which will hopefully attract additional funding.



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- Referred to the imbalance between population growth/number of residential units and community amenities and facilities.
- Welcomed the increase in the commercial rate base.
- Requested additional bin collections, particularly in light of the increase in the use of outdoor spaces, and the need to tackle littering, with an emphasis on the responsibility of businesses that generate litter – funding has been allocated in the budget for compacting bins. Whilst the number of these provided increases each year, there are a number also damaged by fire.
- Queried whether Christmas lights would be provided this year – these will go ahead, although possibly for a shorter timeframe. An analysis had indicated that the associated energy use is not significant. It was agreed that the lights would be switched on at 7.45pm on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> December.
- Requested that consideration be given to producing an information booklet on an annual basis detailing the available community grants, which would be of benefit to older community volunteers.
- Referred to the support provided by Fáilte Ireland to festivals in Kells, Navan and Trim, many of which are heritage based, and queried if such support could be provided to the other municipal districts, e.g. as Ratoath as the gateway to the county – Fáilte Ireland has provided support for the Púca Festival, based in Trim and Athboy, and Samhain Festival in Kells. The Purple Flag receives no funding and requires the support of local businesses and chamber of commerce.

The Draft Budgetary Plan for Ratoath Municipal District was unanimously adopted on the proposal of **Councillor Maria Murphy** and seconded by **Councillor Damien O'Reilly**.

### **2 To discuss the rate of refund to owners of vacant premises.**

It was pointed out that Meath has the lowest rate of vacancies in the country, with approximately 800 of the c 5,000 relevant units vacant. Most of these are small units.

The Economic Development Unit and Finance Department have developed a new pilot Economic Regeneration Scheme, which aims to encourage the return of vacant units to sustainable use. The scheme, which will be available to units that have been vacant for two years or more, will provide occupiers who have paid their rates in full with a grant rebate of 75% in Year 1, 50% in Year 2 and 25% in Year 3. The scheme will target smaller units and certain business activities will be exempt. The existing Business Support Scheme will also continue.



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It is therefore recommended that the 100% rate of refund be retained.

Matters raised by councillors included:

- Acknowledged the adverse impact of vacant and derelict units on towns and villages.
- Requested that the Economic Development Unit, when promoting this scheme, also provide information on all grants available for vacant units, e.g. the Repair and Leasing Scheme.
- Requested an update on rates collection levels – these are holding up, with reference made to the possible impact of the rates waiver scheme.
- Referred to the recent job losses in the IT sector and queried if progress was being made with Enterprise Ireland the IDA – it was pointed out that the impact of global issues is resulting in a very unstable environment.
- Referred to the number of craft fairs in the municipal district and queried if it would be possible to link these crafts people with the owners of vacant units.
- Referred to the links between social enterprises and the catering and food sectors and whether this was a link that could also be explored.

It was unanimously agreed, on the proposal of **Councillor Nick Killian** and seconded by **Councillor Brian Fitzgerald**, to retain the rate at 100%.

### **3 Other**

There was no other business.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed:

**Cathaoirleach**